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**Fire, Medical, Law Enforcement Professionals Urge
“Be Smart! Leave the Fireworks to the Professionals!”**

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan said, “There are better places to spend this Fourth of July than the emergency room, so be smart and leave the fireworks to the professionals.” Coan was joined by State Police members of the Hazardous Devices Unit, Fire Chief Steven Edwards, President of the Fire Chiefs’ Association of Massachusetts, Laura Crawford Brigham and Women’s Hospital’s Trauma & Burn Program Manager, and Dr. Chris Andreoli, Director of the Eye Trauma Service at the Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary at a press conference at the state Department of Fire Services in Stow, MA. This diverse group of professionals spoke with a single voice to deliver the same message.

Fireworks Cause Thousands of Eye Injuries

“Each year, fireworks cause approximately 2,000 eye injuries - some of which result in permanent injuries such as blindness,” said Dr. Chris Andreoli, Director of the Eye Trauma Service at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary. “The majority of people affected are children and young adults. It is important to safeguard against these preventable tragedies by following simple guidelines: let professionals handle the fireworks, stay at least 500 feet away from any fireworks, and do not handle any unexploded fireworks,” he said.

Chief Edwards said, “The Fourth of July is no holiday for firefighters! It is traditionally one of the busiest days for fire departments putting out fires, responding to medical emergencies and supervising the public fireworks displays to make sure they are safe.”

Det. Lt. Martin Foley, commander of the Fire and Explosion Investigation Section said, “Fireworks are illegal in Massachusetts because they are so dangerous and all too often find their way into children’s hands.” According to the Mass. Burn Injury Reporting System, two-thirds, or 66%, of the fireworks burn victims treated at local emergency rooms for burns over 5% of the body surface area were under the age of 18.

PSA Premiered

The group also premiered a public service announcement on the dangers of fireworks. The theme of the PSA is reversible. Dr. so and so said, “So many parents have said to me, ‘if only I could take this day back.’ Don’t be one of those parents, leave the fireworks to the professionals because there is no taking back the havoc fireworks wreak on the body.”

In order to further make that point, the State Police members of the Hazardous Devices Unit assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal, showed a firework totally demolishing a plywood hand and asked people to realize that plywood is so much stronger than a human hand.

Coan said, “This local group of fire, medical, health and law enforcement professionals joins with the national alliance of 21 health and safety organizations to advocate for a ban on consumer fireworks.”